

## The Humanitarian Spirit of Marxist Environmental Philosophy

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### Abstract

The purpose of the article is to discuss the humanitarian spirit of Marxist environmental philosophy and correct the two extremes of modern human environmental philosophy—non anthropocentrism and anthropocentrism on humanitarian mistake cognition; and dialectically manifests that protecting the environment and showing humanitarianism is not conflict. Protecting the environment does not mean to harm the rights of people, and showing humanitarianism does not mean to destroy the ecological environment. To solve the current ecological environment crisis and let people know the dealing with the relation between man and nature, it not only can protect the natural environment, but also does not harm people’s basic rights and interests, values. It is contrary to the humanitarian spirit; it is aimed to build a green, humane and harmonious society finally.

**Key words:** Marxist environmental philosophy; Humanitarian spirit; A harmonious society

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### INTRODUCTION

Humanitarianism refers to the emphasis on the value of human, especially is concerned about the most basic of human life, the thought of basic survival condition, and pays attention to person’s happiness, emphasizes on mutual help, love among humans. According to the interpretation in philosophy of “encyclopedia of China”, the word “humanitarianism” comes from Latin “humanistas” (humanity). As early as in ancient Rome thinker m. t. Cicero, he thinks that this word refers to an education system which can encourage individual talent to have maximum limit development, and with humane spirit. This is the original meaning of humanitarianism. Western humanitarianism originates during the European Renaissance, its core idea is the humanistic spirit, this spirit advocates the human nature, is against the divine, it claims the purpose of life is to pursue happiness in real life, and advocates the individuality liberation, is against the folly of superstition theology, it thinks people are a real life of the creator and master, and is for certainly the value and dignity of the person. In China, humanitarianism also has a long history, as early as the Zhou dynasty, there has been some thoughts, such as, “but person, the soul of the universe”, “between heaven and earth, people are the most honorable”, “life-and-death matter”, and “in love” and so on. In modern society, humanitarianism is still advocated by the national basic moral principles. But in recent years, because environmental problems intensified, it also led to the humanitarian landslides.

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rapid increase and development of the global productivity, science and technology, the per capita income and GNP has been rising quickly, it seems that the prosperous global development is because of at the expense of human survival environment and the ecosystem balance. Human’s survival and development is increasingly threatened by

the ecological environment. We can see that the root cause of environmental problems is human understanding of environmental value is insufficient, people are lack of environmental protection consciousness, they cannot coordinate the relationship between human development and environmental protection. The essence of environmental problems is the development and utilization of nature and its natural resources is faster than the speed of their own regeneration, the number of human discharge waste to nature is more than their withstand maximum. The necessary natural resources and environment for human survival and development is artificially damaged, so it threatens to human's survival and development.

As the ecological environmental problems loom large in recent years, more attention is paid to them, in this year's eighteen big meeting, our country come up with the slogan of building "green society", protecting and loving our ecological environment is urgent. Discussed in academic circles, the ecology and environment has penetrated into all disciplines, but in Einstein's opinion, philosophy is "the mother of all science", so it's its duty-bound to give advice on the solution of the environmental problems. However, some people think, protecting the ecological environment is against the humanitarian spirit which is advocated by the contemporary society, because they think it will damage the interests of the human beings. Actually, it's just a kind of segmentary and extreme view about nature conservation and anthropocentrism from non-anthropocentrism and egocentrism. It is also the key of Marxist environmental philosophy beyond its. Marxist environmental philosophy fits up organically between protecting the ecological environment and implementation of a real humanitarian.

## **1. SOME MISUNDERSTANDING TO HUMANITARIANISM FROM THE RELATED GENRE WHICH IS BEFORE MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF ENVIRONMENT**

### **1.1 Non-Human Centralism Abandons Completely on "Human"**

To be honest, the essence of Non-anthropocentrism is actually a kind of original ecological protection. In their thought, anthropocentrism is the main culprit of environmental problems, they completely veto it, and think that people should set up a natural centered and fundamental measure of the value system, and then people can protect the nature and the environment. Some extreme thoughts, such as "Cutting down a tree is destroying the forest, it will destroy the ecological nature", all human's practice will cause damage to the ecological environment, all rejected, it is sure to violate humanitarian spirit? The

nature center doctrine scholars believe that people should be "based on nature" when dealing with environmental problems, when solving the relationship between man and nature, people should mention first the standpoint of the nature center. People should regard them as an ordinary member of the nature. They deny that the humans have subjectivity and creativity.

### **1.2 Anthropocentrism Respect for "People" Pathologically**

Compared with anthropocentrism from the non-anthropocentrism, anthropocentrism focus on the human's values and interests, but too much emphasis on people-oriented, and degrade nature, it thinks that nature are only tools of human survival and development. Anthropocentrism regards the interests of the people as starting point and standard, it seems to be safeguard of human rights and the practice of the humanitarian spirit, but fundamentally, it destroys natural environment, defies the laws of nature, and eventually leads to bitter or swallow down ourselves. How can it make sure it is an effective proponent of humanitarian walker?

Britain Schumacher once said that civilization can almost always temporarily become the master of environment. The main distress from mistaken for his temporary rule is permanent. He sees himself as the master of the world, without fully understanding the laws of nature.

## **2. THE TRANSCENDENCE OF MARXIST ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN SPIRIT**

### **2.1 Making Up the Defects of Heavy Nature and Ignorance of Human of Non-Anthropocentrism**

Humanitarianism cares more about people's survival and development. However, non-anthropocentrism only pays attention to the nature, it is against all human's activities to change nature, people are almost willing to fear and obey the nature. Obviously, this is an obstacle to advocate humanitarian spirit. Environmental philosophy is not only about the philosophy of the environment, but also a kind of new humanism, namely, from the perspective of the relationship between human and environment, it is a new reflection on the man himself, a new reappraisal and specification on human behavior, a new ultimate care for human survival. Marxist environmental philosophy thinks that nature has its objective laws, it will not transfer by the will and activities of people, but at the same time, people have independent initiative, they can make some changes to nature according to their own needs without violating the law of change.

## 2.2 Fixing the Disadvantages That People Are Central, Nature for Tools of Anthropocentrism

Engels once said that we don't enjoy our victory over nature. For each victory, the nature has revenged us. For each victory, in the first step, we really get the expected results, but in the second and the third step, there is a complete and unexpected difference, because the first result is canceled. Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor, and other residents around the world, in order to get the cultivated land, they cut down the forest, but they can't imagine, these places today has therefore become a desolate wasteland, because they make these places lost forest, and also lost the center of the accumulation and storage of water. Extreme anthropocentrism leads people to put the human interests above everything else, in order to achieve a goal, people break the limitation of the law of nature, claim and transform nature without limitation, destroy nature and kill creatures, so the result is the destruction of the natural ecosystem environment and the lose of effectiveness of earth's resources gradually, then people make the deterioration of the natural environment, then the contradiction between human and nature is becoming more and more highlighted.

C. S. Lewis (1943) once said that the human's conquest on nature, in fact, is conquest of nature on human. Every time we seem to be victory, but step by step we approach the result above. All natural retreat on the surface, in fact is a tactical retreat. When it is luring human deeply, we think it is losing. In our opinion, it is surrender, it is actually an arm escape us. Marxist environmental philosophy also emphasizes person's value and status, at the same time he also thinks if people want to realize their own value and purpose, obtain development, first of all they have to admit that the value of nature, nature is the premise for human survival and development, if people destroy nature, it also ruins the man himself.

## 2.3 The Forming of the Correct, Transcendence Theory of Environmental Philosophy

There is interaction among nature, society and people, they form a connected whole. Previous points of view think the society is independent presence, it is above the nature, Previous points of view only endow the active content to society and human, they regard the nature as a presence without vigor and vitality. But the development of the ecology makes us realize that nature is also an organic full of the energy movement, and the organic whole will provide a variety of material energy to human beings and society. There is no nature, there is no the development of society and the human, at the same time, the progress of human and social also affects the development of nature. These three are an organic connection, an integral whole. We have only one earth, if the earth's ecological system is destroyed, human beings will not survive. The earth is our home; so far, it is the earth that only allows us to survive. Ecosystem is a perennial safeguard which makes up the

whole earth. Without a good ecological system, there is no maintenance and development of the earth. Without the earth to survive, people cannot live necessarily.

Marx regards the activities of human practice as the intermediary of relation between man and nature, and he puts forward the new theory that the relationship between man and nature is opposite and unified. He thinks that labor is man's nature; it is in the process of labor that human beings confirmed their nature. Marx believes that the unity and opposites of relationship between human and nature reflects in two aspects: the humanized nature and natured human. First of all, human change the original state of nature through labor to result in nature humanization. Marx said that the animals just according to the scale of the species and needs which it belongs to mold, while people know how to product according to the scale of any species, and can measure objects according to their inherent scale at any time and place; therefore, people also shape the objects under the principle of beauty. Human changed the face and form of the nature through the productive labor, so nature changes according to human's expectations and needs, then nature becomes a kind of human activity. Second, at the same time of human remaking nature, nature also has effects inevitably on human, so nature constantly make person natured. Marx and Engels believe that the relationship between human and nature are interrelated, interaction and mutual dependence, on the one hand, the relationship between people and nature is conditioned by people's social relations; on the other hand, social relations among humans is conditioned by the relationship between human and nature.

In the concept of Marxist philosophy, it not only emphasizes the analysis of social relationship, but also focuses on the analysis of interaction between man and nature. Marx regards the relationship among people, society and nature as his philosophical foundation. There are two points we must pay special attention here: (a) Nature occupies an important status in Marx's view of history; nature is the premise for society and history. as a living individual, he is from nature, and is a part of nature, is the people in the nature; (b) People is the main part of the history, he creates the nature of anthropology, which makes the nature obtain social and historical dimension. On the one hand, as an organized group, the human society is also developed from natural groups; On the other hand, the nature is the natural premise for human to create history, we should see the world from the interaction between human and nature, namely, we see the world from practice. It is the transform from the nature to human, and also it's the movement from human to nature. This is the human history and the history of the world. According to this view of history, nature is the nature of anthropology, we can't take out human and human' role from nature, and only from the perspective of the interaction between human and nature, nature can be understandable.

In the end, Marx and Engels criticize the previous two one-sided view of nature with the practical materialism viewpoint, and then establish the idea of harmonious development of man and nature. His main points are: (a) Nature has significant effect to society and history, but nature and man can't be separated. Because the nature of reality is the nature of anthropology, it cannot be understood if nature and human is separated. (b) People and society are the main part to create the history; people create society on the basis of nature. Nature and man can't be separated. Because there is no human separated from nature, if human and society are separated from nature they are only the abstract objects rather than the real ones, it is also incomprehensible. (c) The real world is the world of the interaction between human and nature. It's not just the sum total of human and nature, but a whole from the interaction between human and nature. As a whole, it has the special feature that the two components don't have, but produce from their mutual relations. (d) The relationship between human and nature which true humanitarianism shows is on the basis of mutual respect and love each other, it does not mean to pay attention to one and despise the other, it realizes in the specific social development, in a certain social form, and with the aid of this kind of social forms. This is a kind of connection of social history. At the same time, the relationship between human and nature achieves in the specific natural environment, through the intermediary of human labor, with the form of reasonable change, development and utilization of nature. This is a kind of connection of natural history.

### 3. BUILD A GREEN, HUMANE ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY SOCIETY

Humanitarianism requires all people's all-round development in China; people's all-round development is not only an important philosophical proposition of Marxist theory, but also the important goal of socialist modernization construction in our country. But in the current, our country's environmental problems stand out a lot, these environmental problems intensify the contradiction between human and nature, and at the same time they affect the person's full scale development. In this case, our government proposes the construction of environment-friendly society in our country.

Humans exist and develop in both the social factors and natural factors; they have both social attribute, and nature attribute. But humans, however, are the product of nature. Nature is people's home, is the only habitat for humans to live, people cannot live without nature. As Marx said, people are directly natural existence and are natural existence of life. People from birth, they have to accept the gift of nature and depend on nature to survive, such as atmosphere, water, soil, etc.. So, the human and the natural ecological environment can't be inseparable,

good ecological environment is the necessary premise for human survival and development.

Environment-friendly, as the material achievements of human social practice, showing the harmony between man and nature and forming a good ecological environment; As a kind of spirit achievement of human, showing the scientific ecological consciousness of respecting for nature and treating nature well. In the relationship between human and nature, the environment-friendly emphases that people should follow generally the practice guidelines of the unity of truth, goodness, beauty and connect organically the inside dimensions of the subject and the external dimensions of object when dealing with the relationship between nature. That is to say, humans can transform the natural environment according to our own ideal, need, purpose, will, knowledge and ability, but also people can mould us according to the intrinsic nature of nature, law of development, realistic conditions. Then people can achieve natured human and humanized nature comprehensively and freely, eliminate the one-sided confrontation between human and the nature fundamentally, and then establish the type of relationship which is two-way, win-win, friendly, and new between people and natural environment on this basis of it. In this kind of relationship, there is comprehensive and reasonable two-way objectification. They both are harmonious and can develop friendly, it can not only protect the environment and achieve sustainable development, but also they can avoid ecology crisis to bring disaster to mankind fundamentally. People can experience the true humanitarianism in getting along well with nature.

To deal with the relationship between man and nature well, and realize the real humanitarian spirit, of course, human should adjust the position of man and nature. Nowadays, human have to overcome the growing crisis of ecological environment, realize the harmonious and sustainable development between human and nature, and promote the construction of the socialist harmonious society that one of its important characteristics is the harmony between man and nature. They are very urgent and difficult task, we have to face them. From Marx's scientific and outstanding ideas about the dialectical relationship between human and nature, we can get some important enlightenment to solve these problems. One of the enlightenments is human should adjust their positions in nature. People come from nature, it is a part of nature, so they should not be above nature, or stand in nature, and add to anthropocentrism, but they should be melt into nature. Nature is the only home of human, so human treasure, take good care of the nature is to cherish, love their own homes, and destroying nature is equal to destroy their homes. The second enlightenment: human must know they are different from general natural existence; they have the initiative and creativity. Therefore, they should also be against one-sided views from non-human centralism. Such as, this point of view excuse to restore and maintain the



external world of nature, it denies human's eminent position in nature, it thinks that human is just ordinary citizens in the ecological system, it makes human to general animal, they can only passively adapt to the order of nature.

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## CONCLUSION

We must firmly establish the concept of harmonious development between human and the nature. As nature is the foundation of human survival and development, and there is the relationship of material transformation and interaction between human and nature. Then for human beings' own survival and development, they cannot oppose themselves and nature, but they should treat the nature well, and realize the harmonious development of man and nature. Only in this way, can human reveal truly the humanitarian spirit; and achieve real freedom and liberty of people. You know, the real liberation does not mean to control nature, but can be in harmony with nature.

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